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Report of the Chairmen of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the twenty-sixth series of Joint Meetings of the two Committees

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 4	2
I. OPENING STATEMENTS	5 - 19	2
A. Statement by the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination	5 - 10	2
B. Statement by the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination	11 - 19	4
II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION	20 - 47	5
III. CONCLUDING STATEMENTS	48 - 57	10
IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	58 - 69	11

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held the twenty-sixth series of Joint Meetings at United Nations Headquarters on 22, 23 and 25 October 1991, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Chairman of ACC (in his absence, the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, acted as Chairman of ACC) and Maria Elisa de Bittencourt Berenguer (Brazil), Chairman of CPC.

2. The provisional agenda for the Joint Meetings (E/1991/140) was adopted; it contained the following item: "Implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade by the organizations of the United Nations system".

3. The Joint Meetings had before them a background paper, prepared by the ACC Task Force on Long-term Development Objectives on the basis of contributions from the relevant organizations of the United Nations system.

4. In accordance with past practice, a meeting at the senior working level was held prior to the Joint Meetings for a preliminary exchange of views and to identify specific talking points which would provide the focus for the dialogue between members of the two Committees.

I. OPENING STATEMENTS

A. Statement by the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

5. The Chairman of CPC recalled that the Joint Meetings represented a unique opportunity for a high-level dialogue between Member States and the executive heads of United Nations organizations of the United Nations system. She stated that the purpose of the Meetings, as set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/64 of 27 July 1988 was to promote a better understanding and coordination of the activities of the system in the economic and social fields. That need, which had been recognized more than a quarter of a century before, had become even more urgent in the light of the growth of the system and the increasingly complex tasks it was expected to fulfil in response to the demands of Member States.

6. At its thirty-first session, CPC had reaffirmed the importance of coordination in the United Nations system and had pointed to the need to improve coordination mechanisms. The Committee had concluded that coordination should ensure the most effective division of labour and mutual complementarity of efforts and should lead to the efficient and coherent utilization of human and financial resources put at the disposal of the organizations of the system. It had also underlined the central role of ACC,

and of the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of ACC, in bringing about concerted and effective responses by all the entities of the system to a large number of global problems, many of which were interrelated.

7. The Chairman of CPC recalled that the Committee had previously identified the implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade by the organizations of the United Nations system as the topic for the twenty-sixth series of Joint Meetings of CPC and ACC. At its thirty-first session, CPC had recommended that the question of the implementation of the provisions of the Final Declaration of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, in their relation to the Strategy, should also be kept in mind when addressing the topic.

8. She noted that two years earlier, at the twenty-fourth series of Joint Meetings, CPC and ACC had discussed the preparation of the Strategy. The Committees had recommended, inter alia, that the executive heads of the organizations and agencies of the system should bring to the attention of their respective governing bodies the relevant parts of the new strategy, with a view to adopting policies and programmes which would facilitate its implementation. Now that the Strategy had been adopted and its implementation had begun, the Joint Meetings should examine whether it was being translated into focused and coherent action. It was imperative to use the full potential of the Strategy as a coordinating instrument, so as to mobilize collective capacities and to put all available resources to their best use. This required that a straightforward approach be adopted in identifying such problems in coordination as might exist and the adoption of practical measures to solve them.

9. She also noted that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/264 of 13 May 1991 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/67 of 26 July 1991, the twenty-sixth series of the Joint Meetings was entrusted with the task of suggesting themes to be considered by the Council during the coordination segment of its regular session in 1992. Also the Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its thirty-first session, had recommended that the twenty-sixth series of the Joint Meetings make suggestions to the Economic and Social Council on the themes to be discussed during the high-level segment of its session. The themes for both the coordination and high-level segments would be determined by the Council at its organizational session, to be held in February 1992.

10. In conclusion, the Chairman of CPC drew the attention of participants to the relevance of the Joint Meetings in respect of one of the fundamental objectives of the United Nations, as stated in its Charter: to employ the international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

B. Statement by the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

11. The Director-General for Development and International Cooperation, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of ACC, stressed that it was very timely that the discussion between CPC and ACC on the implementation of the Strategy was taking place just one year after its adoption by the General Assembly. This allowed Member States to comment on the arrangements that the United Nations system had put in place to implement the Strategy and to provide guidance in the form of not only general ideas but also concrete suggestions.

12. Since the background document before the meetings provided information on the activities undertaken and envisaged by organizations of the system, as well as the coordination arrangements that had been put in place, the Director-General focused his remarks on the substance of the Strategy. The present Strategy, by providing both intellectual depth and a sense of direction, was increasingly recognized as a frame of reference of the highest importance. He stressed, therefore, that the Strategy constituted a useful and valid blueprint for concerted actions by the organizations of the system.

13. He pointed out that the Strategy was the first major document agreed upon after the adoption by the General Assembly, at its eighteenth special session, of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries. The Declaration provided confirmation of the commitment by Member States to strengthen national and international cooperation in order to rekindle growth and development, particularly in the developing countries.

14. The Director-General referred to the six interrelated goals enumerated in the Strategy and warned that political and social instability could spread if there were not major changes in policies to permit the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy.

15. He emphasized that in the light of the profound changes in Eastern Europe and in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, those countries needed assistance to allow them to create the basis for sustained economic growth. In that regard, the international community and the United Nations system should consider how to generate the financial resources to meet both the needs of the developing countries and those of modernizing the productive structures of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This would facilitate the integration of all countries into the emerging global economy in an effective manner, while consolidating and perfecting pluralistic political systems everywhere. This was the rationale for the international conference on the financing of development, proposed by the Secretary-General at the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council.

16. He underlined that resources for development should come also from the savings generated by significant reductions in military expenditure and agricultural subsidies. Those issues, he said, should be discussed in 1992 by

the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at its eighth session, and by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

17. He stressed the necessity to undertake measures to solve the problems of bilateral and multilateral debt of the low-income and middle-income countries. He believed that the developed countries should reduce interest rates within the framework of a better balance between fiscal and monetary policies in order to stimulate growth and to provide a stable international environment. Major international efforts were required for the African continent in order to avoid economic breakdown and social and political chaos.

18. The Director-General pointed to the special role of organs and organizations of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Strategy. At the practical level, much could be done to ensure a greater consistency between the sectoral targets of the agencies and the overall objectives of the International Development Strategy.

19. In conclusion, the Director-General noted that, in view of the close relationship between the implementation of Strategy and the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, the review exercises envisaged for both could perhaps be combined.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

20. Members of both Committees expressed their appreciation for the background paper prepared by the ACC Task Force on Long-term Development Objectives. Some members of CPC noted that the paper would have been even more useful had it been made available at an earlier date.

21. In addition to the information contained in the background paper, some members of ACC provided further details on their activities relating to the implementation of the International Development Strategy in their respective areas of competence. Some of them, in particular, described their current efforts and the targets for future activities in the fields of health, human resources development, agriculture, food aid, education and culture, financial support, environment and human settlements.

22. It was generally agreed that, in the implementation of the Strategy, action was to be led by Governments with the support of the entire international community, including the United Nations system.

23. A number of members of CPC stressed that, in order for the organizations of the United Nations system successfully to play their role in the implementation of the Strategy, they should, in the first place, ensure efficient and effective use of the funds and other resources made available to them. They pointed out that the increasingly complex demands placed upon the organizations, and the multisectoral and interrelated character of their activities, made it necessary to enhance complementarity.

24. Some members of the two Committees noted that while for many countries the 1980s were a "lost decade" in terms of development, bringing little or negative growth, the task of Governments and organizations of the United Nations system was to make the Fourth United Nations Development Decade far more fruitful in order to ensure that the 1990s was a decade of true economic and social progress throughout the world. Some members of both Committees pointed to the need for greater financial resources. Others stressed that the issue at hand was how best to harness the considerable financial and human resources already available to the United Nations system. The review of the Strategy provided an opportunity to put into action the concept of a unitary United Nations, the key to which was cooperation and coordination. By working together, duplication, overlap, competition and other wasteful activities would be avoided and coherent action ensured.

25. Members of the two Committees expressed their common view that the improvement of coordination and cooperation among the organizations of the system was a major factor for their effective participation in the implementation of the Strategy. They recognized the adequacy of the existing ACC machinery for system-wide coordination and emphasized that efforts should be made to improve its effectiveness.

26. Some participants underlined that the organizations of the system should maximize the collective impact of their actions in appropriate sectors by enhancing the division of labour in the light of comparative advantages. Others recommended that a more sharply defined focus in the sectoral implementation of the Strategy could be achieved through the use of common targets and indicators as coordination instruments. It was suggested that the Secretary-General should submit, for consideration at the Joint Meetings, his ideas on the division of labour within the system with regard to the specific plans, programmes and projects of organizations in order to define more clearly their fields of competence and responsibility in that respect.

27. Some participants pointed to the need for all Member States to accelerate national efforts to coordinate their work in various organizations of the system.

28. Several members of the two Committees emphasized the importance of coordination at the country level. It was stated that joint planning exercises between the sectoral ministries of Governments and the representatives of the United Nations sectoral agencies during each country's programming cycle, under the coordination of resident coordinators, should be institutionalized. One member of ACC suggested that the coordination between Ministries of Foreign Affairs and other national institutions should be improved so that national organizations involved in various economic and social sectors would have appropriate knowledge of the substance of the Strategy, its specific goals and its objectives.

29. It was pointed out that while the scarcity of financial resources had been a major obstacle to the implementation of the previous International Development Strategy, it was not the only one. Development had a number of

preconditions that took time to achieve and that required a painstaking gradual buildup of capacities and capabilities. The experience with technical cooperation projects in developing countries showed that in many cases the lack of adequate institutional capacity in the recipient countries was a more important factor.

30. Several members of the two Committees drew attention to the need to promote human resources development which was connected with the eradication of poverty, hunger and illiteracy, the provision of health and the preservation of the environment.

31. Several members of CPC noted that the thrust of the Strategy was to promote the economic growth of the developing countries by strengthening their endogenous capacity. In that connection, the importance of the transfer of technology and the provision of new and additional financial resources was underlined. The sustained and effective implementation of the Strategy also required a favourable international climate.

32. A number of participants pointed out that one of the key themes of the Strategy centred on the need to address the deep poverty that trapped over a billion human beings. The aim of the Strategy in that regard was to enhance the capabilities of those men and women by improving their access to food, to education and to health services. It was stressed that, in order to alleviate rural poverty and to increase food availability and the nutritional status of the most deprived groups of the population, it was necessary to concentrate the activities of appropriate organizations of the United Nations system on assistance to smallholders and rural women through the provision of credit, technology, training and access to markets.

33. Some participants emphasized the importance of food aid in the fight against hunger and in assisting poor countries in their development. Food aid from the relevant United Nations organizations was provided to more than one billion people, mostly women. It was pointed out that the coordinating mechanism within the United Nations system should be flexible in order to strengthen joint action in the area of food aid.

34. One member of ACC noted that goals of the Strategy coincided with the goals and objectives in the area of health and that the highest attainable standard of health was a major objective of human development. Attention was drawn to two health problems which particularly illustrated the need for cooperation and coordination of development activities, namely, cholera and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). While cholera was considered a purely development issue caused by poverty conditions, AIDS was a different problem and one of the greatest challenges to development in the 1990s and beyond.

35. One member of ACC highlighted the linkage between the refugee problem and the development process. The majority of the some 17 million refugees, he stressed, were situated in developing countries and originated from developing countries. A comprehensive and multifaceted response to this global problem

required that the following developmental elements be addressed: preventive action to address the root causes of refugee movements, including action in the social and economic sectors of the countries of origin; measures to ameliorate the situation of refugees and the developing countries hosting them; and strategies to facilitate solutions to the refugee problem, especially through development processes aimed at making voluntary repatriation a viable and durable solution. Such elements could appropriately be addressed through the review and appraisal mechanism of the International Development Strategy. Cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other organizations competent in the field of development, he said, was already effectively taking place.

36. Another member of ACC noted that due attention in the development process in the 1990s should be paid to the question of drug abuse which could no longer be considered only a social problem but also a major economic one. Since the 1990s had also been proclaimed by the General Assembly as the United Nations Decade Against Drug Abuse, the implementation of the Plan of Action for that Decade and of the International Development Strategy demanded joint and coordinated action by the world community.

37. Some participants highlighted the need for relevant organizations of the United Nations system to assist Governments in maximizing the use of existing science and technology in the exploitation of natural resources, particularly in the fields of food production, water resources development and energy. It was stressed that an international agreement should be drawn up to preserve the natural resources vital to development.

38. Several members of the two Committees expressed their hope that genuine efforts would be made to reduce the level of global armaments, thus allowing the resources that would be released from war and civil strife to be channelled into productive purposes. One member of CPC called upon appropriate United Nations organizations and the international community to assist his country in the conversion of more than 1,000 military enterprises located in its territory.

39. On the question of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategy at the global, sectoral and regional levels, some participants pointed out that a coherent procedure should be set up for that purpose. The view was expressed that emphasis should be placed not upon the appraisal of activities of the United Nations system in general, but rather upon the monitoring of progress towards the attainment of the concrete objectives of the International Development Strategy, thereby providing guidance for reinforcing action in certain areas and for amending and revising the Strategy.

40. It was suggested that the review and appraisal mechanism of the Strategy could address and contribute to the solution of global problems, including the refugee problem, by examining in particular the responsiveness of the development process to social needs and the adequacy of the measures taken towards the eradication of extreme poverty.

41. The participants exchanged views on a number of themes that could be discussed during the coordination and high-level segments of the regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1992.

42. Regarding the coordination segment, some members of CPC believed that the issue "science and technology for development" should be the theme discussed, while others indicated a preference for the issue "strengthening of the United Nations in the field of operational activities, including the coordinating role to be played by the Economic and Social Council". One member of CPC expressed support for the discussion of that theme at both the coordination and high-level segments of the Council's session.

43. A number of members of CPC called for the strengthening of operational activities to be the theme to be discussed during the coordination segment. They considered that the functioning of the United Nations system in the area of operational activities was in need of strengthening in order to overcome problems of fragmentation and marginalization.

44. Other members considered that the assured availability of financial resources for development was extremely important and that, therefore, the issue of financing of development should be the theme to be discussed.

45. It was also suggested that the issue "economic and social development and its interrelationship with democracy and human rights" be combined with "the eradication of poverty" as one theme.

46. Some speakers, while stressing the importance of the topic of "coordinated approach of the United Nations system in the implementation of decisions to be taken by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development", expressed the view that there was too little time between the completion of the Conference and the regular session of the Council in 1992 to complete all the necessary preparations for an effective debate in the Council, and they therefore recommended that the issue be taken up as a theme for the Council in 1993.

47. Following the adoption of the conclusions and recommendations (see paras. 58-69 below), one member of CPC expressed opposition to the provisions of paragraph 66, which referred to the necessity of increasing the financial resources for the realization of the goals and objectives of the Strategy. He reiterated the view of his Government that the challenge facing the United Nations today was to utilize the resources and talent available to produce the most effective results possible. In that regard, he also stated that his Government had opposed the idea of convening an international conference on the financing of development as a waste of resources which might be better spent on programmes, since questions such as resources for development, debt relief and additional capital were already being discussed in other forums.

III. CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

48. In a statement made at the concluding session of the Joint Meetings, the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of ACC, underlined that the full and effective implementation of the Strategy posed a great challenge to Governments, as well as to international organizations.

49. Developing countries, especially those in Africa, continued to face serious economic difficulties. The growth of the world economy was still very slow, while the need for financing economic transformation and reconstruction in different parts of the world had placed additional demands on scarce resources. At the same time, he stressed, the opportunities were immense and the world was moving into a new phase of international relations where Governments were much more open to change and much more willing to cooperate, and the United Nations had to take full advantage of the new situation.

50. In the view of the Secretary-General, the International Development Strategy provided an important framework for the world community to build on past experience and to concert efforts for the promotion of growth and development. As reflected in the background paper prepared for the Joint Meetings, the organizations of the United Nations system were taking steps to integrate the goals and objectives of the Strategy into their respective plans and programmes. Efforts had been made to use the available financial resources in the most efficient way. He believed, however, that the effectiveness of coordination at the secretariat level would be greatly enhanced by parallel efforts on the part of Governments to harmonize their positions in the governing bodies of the system.

51. One of the key elements for the implementation of the Strategy was the availability of financial resources. In that regard, the Secretary-General referred to his proposal to convene an international conference on the financing of development, which had been supported by many participants at the Joint Meetings. He expressed the hope that agreement would be reached on the matter during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

52. He pointed out that, with the profound changes taking place in the world, it was important for the international community to pay greater attention to the promotion of economic and social progress, which was essential for peace and security. This would require the same degree of political will and commitment that Governments had demonstrated recently in the political field. The United Nations system would have an important role to play in that regard, and had to work closely with Member States. In that context, the Joint Meetings provided an important channel for interaction and cooperation.

53. In her concluding remarks, the Chairman of CPC reaffirmed the hope that the success of the United Nations in the political field would also be felt in the economic and social field and welcomed the remarks of the Secretary-General concerning the importance he attached to economic and social progress.

54. The role of the system in assisting Member States to implement the Strategy for the 1990s, she stressed, was an important element, as was the selection of proposed themes for discussion by the Economic and Social Council. The Joint Meetings provided a unique opportunity to combine the input of both Governments and the members of the United Nations system in order to formulate recommendations on those matters.

55. She raised the question of whether the Joint Meetings had indeed produced a genuine and focused dialogue at a high level, in conformity with the format agreed upon. Should the answer to that question prove negative, the causes should be given some thought, with an open mind.

56. In the view of the Chairman of CPC, a wealth of information had been shared in the presentations made by participants on both sides, on a wide range of matters. As this had been the practice not only at the present series of meetings, but also at previous Joint Meetings, there appeared to be a need to maintain such presentations. Nevertheless, the need still persisted to pursue a more dynamic dialogue, a matter which called for consideration by the competent bodies.

57. While the intended format of the Meetings had not been followed to the letter, the twenty-sixth series of Joint Meetings had indeed been productive in that it had enhanced awareness on both sides. Together with commitment, that awareness should promote the effectiveness of coordinated action.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

58. The Joint Meetings reaffirm the validity of the goals and objectives agreed upon by the international community in adopting, one year ago the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. The goals of the Strategy can and must be realized. It is emphasized that human development is one of the central issues in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Strategy. The 1990s must be a decade of genuine development. The unsatisfactory level of performance and progress which characterized the 1980s cannot be repeated. A supportive international economic environment and appropriate and determined policies at the national level are both required in order for the Strategy to become a success.

59. It is recognized that national Governments bear the main responsibility for realizing the objectives contained in the Strategy. The role of the organizations of the United Nations system is to support fully and effectively the efforts of national Governments in that regard.

60. While to a large extent the goals of the Strategy incorporate similar goals already contained in the sectoral strategies adopted by the governing bodies of the organizations of the system, the Strategy calls for greater coherence in the work of the international system in its implementation. The Joint Meetings reiterate the importance of cooperation and collaboration among the organizations of the United Nations system and the necessity for

continuous efforts to enhance coordination. Existing instruments and mechanisms for inter-agency coordination should be improved and fully utilized in pursuit of the goals of the Strategy. The need for more effective coordination at the national level is also recognized.

61. The Strategy provides an important framework for organizations of the system to concert their efforts in promoting the economic growth and development of developing countries. It is emphasized that special attention should be given to the problems and requirements of the least developed countries.

62. An effective division of labour, in accordance with the mandate of each organization, would allow the organizations of the system to maximize their collective impact. Ways should be found to ensure more interaction between the Bretton Woods institutions and the other organizations of the United Nations system. Coordination should seek to promote greater complementarity of action. This is particularly important in light of the multisectoral and multidisciplinary nature of the Strategy, and particularly in the translation of its objectives into effective system-wide programmes.

63. The Joint Meetings agree that the organizations of the United Nations system must ensure that the resources made available to them are utilized in a most effective and efficient manner. It is essential that Governments have comprehensive and transparent information on all such resources and the way in which they are utilized by the organizations of the system. In this connection, the new report of ACC on programmes and resources is welcomed. Steps should continue to be taken to improve the methodology used for that report, as recommended by the CPC at its thirty-first session.

64. The role of the organizations of the United Nations system can be particularly effective in strengthening the endogenous capacity of developing countries, including at the institutional level.

65. Coherence of the action taken by organizations of the system is particularly important at the national level. In this regard, enhanced efforts to achieve more effective coordination, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 44/211, are emphasized. Effective collaboration among organizations of the system could best be ensured by the active participation of all concerned at the stage of the conceptualization and formulation of development programmes. In this connection, national execution of projects is also stressed. The Joint Meetings reconfirm the primary responsibility of recipient countries to coordinate development assistance activities at the national level. In this context, the Joint Meetings emphasize the need for United Nations organizations to coordinate their activities closely with other multilateral and bilateral donors.

66. The Joint Meetings recognize the enormity of the challenge of fully implementing the International Development Strategy. Greater resources, made available on a multi-year basis, will be required to realize its goals. The new political international climate provides an opportunity to redirect

resources to development activities. In this regard, the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene a conference on the financing of development deserves the most serious consideration by all concerned.

67. The Joint Meetings emphasize the importance of the review and appraisal of the Strategy. It is noted that many organizations of the United Nations system have previously agreed upon sectoral targets which are clearly related to goals of the Strategy. The organizations of the system may need to review and revise, if necessary, their own targets and indicators in order to facilitate more comprehensive and accurate reporting for the review and appraisal of the Strategy. The need is emphasized for appropriate adjustments in the activities of the United Nations system related to the implementation of the International Development Strategy in order to face changing circumstances throughout the decade. It is stressed that investment in poverty alleviation is economically viable and should be given a more coordinated focus in the implementation of the Strategy. It is agreed that a concise and analytical biennial report should be prepared on the implementation of the Strategy. The report should indicate progress, as well as bottlenecks or obstacles encountered by the system in their activities in support of the efforts of Governments to implement the Strategy, and should suggest remedial action.

68. The Joint Meetings agree that, given the close interrelationships between the goals and objectives of the Strategy and those of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, consideration should be given to combining the review and appraisal exercises envisaged for each of them.

69. The Joint Meetings decide to submit, for the consideration by the Economic and Social Council at its organizational session for 1992, the following proposed themes which are not listed in any order of preference, for discussion by the Council during the coordination and high-level segments of its regular session in 1992:

(a) Strengthening of the work of the United Nations in the field of operational activities, including the coordinating role to be played by the Economic and Social Council;

(b) Coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in the field of operational activities;

(c) Science and technology for development;

(d) Issues of coordination arising from the decisions to be taken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(e) Relationships among socio-economic development, protection of human rights and democratization of society;

(f) International trade system and its impact on the development of the developing countries; 1/

(g) Eradication of poverty in the developing countries, including the impact of structural adjustment programmes on vulnerable groups; 1/

(h) Financing of development.

Notes

1/ See Economic and Social Council decision 1990/205.